TRU TeamWorks

May 31, 2007

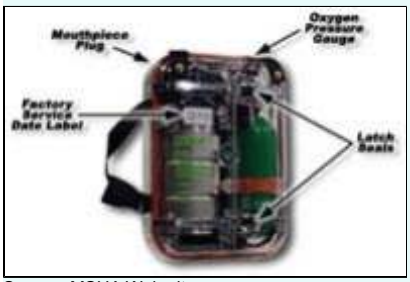
WIPP Quick Facts
(As of 5-30-07)

5,801
Shipments received since opening

48,545
Cubic meters of waste disposed

90,348
Containers disposed in the underground

WIPP underground personnel will continue to carry the W65 self-rescuer.



Source: MSHA Web site

The SCSRs will be stored in caches throughout the WIPP underground.

New mine safety requirement to be implemented at WIPP this summer

Safety has always played a vital role at WIPP. Later this summer, a new safety requirement will affect all underground personnel.

In the aftermath of a tragic incident at West Virginia's Sago mine that killed 12 people, the New Mexico State Legislature passed House Bill 685 that requires changes in mine safety.

One of the changes includes the requirement of self-contained, self-rescuer (SCSR) devices. The bill requires underground personnel to wear or have access to a SCSR that adequately protects them for one hour or longer, or gives them enough time to reach other SCSRs.

Richard Van Derveer (right), executive vice president for Ocenco, the company that manufacturers the SCSRs that will be used at WIPP, was recently on-site to teach some classes on the proper use of the unit. Pictured with him above are Jim Hollen, Mike Rogers, Norbert Rempe and Jill Farnsworth.

WIPP's shipment of SCSRs will arrive in late July and will consist of 400 units. Employees will continue to carry the current W65 self-rescuers to reach the nearest cache of SCSRs in case of emergency.

"The main difference is the SCSR provides oxygen for the user, while the W65 self-rescuer filters the carbon monoxide and converts it into carbon dioxide," says Jill Farnsworth, a senior engineer of the WTS mine engineering department.

The new SCSRs provide a user with over 60 minutes of oxygen while evacuating the mine. In the event evacuating from an oxygen deficient atmosphere cannot readily be achieved, the SCSR can operate for up to eight hours when the user is at rest.

All underground personnel will have access to the SCSR units. Caches will be placed throughout the mine in specific locations to accommodate the number of people who work in each area.

Prior to the SCSRs being in place, all underground-qualified personnel will be trained on how to properly use the units in the event of an emergency.

URS TO ACQUIRE WASHINGTON GROUP INTERNATIONAL FOR $2.6 BILLION IN CASH AND STOCK

SAN FRANCISCO, CA and BOISE, ID – May 28, 2007 – URS Corporation (NYSE: URS) and Washington Group International, Inc. (NYSE: WNG) today announced that they have signed a definitive agreement for the acquisition of Washington Group by URS in a cash and stock transaction valued at approximately $2.6 billion. The transaction will combine two world-class engineering and construction companies, expand the capabilities of both firms and capitalize on their positions in important high growth sectors, including power, infrastructure and environmental management.

Local ANS section learns about France's nuclear power

As a nuclear energy resurgence appears on the horizon in the U.S., Carlsbad's American Nuclear Society section considered France's decision to embrace the industry 30 years ago.

Chemist Dr. Jean-Francois Lucchini (LANL-CO) gave a presentation titled "France and Nuclear Energy: A Success Story" before about 35 people at the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center on May 24.

Lucchini has a Ph.D. from the University of Paris XI and has worked at a number of nuclear facilities in France, including the world's largest commercial nuclear reprocessing plant.

Nearly 80 percent of France's electricity comes from 58 nuclear power plants -- one of the highest percentages of electricity production from nuclear power in the world. France has the lowest electric bills in Europe and has not only greatly reduced its energy dependency, but exports 15 percent of its electricity to neighboring countries, Lucchini explained. Carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced by 18 percent since 1980, while energy consumption has increased 46 percent.

At the time of the 1973 oil crisis, only 2 percent of France's energy mix was composed of nuclear power, and as much of the world spurned nuclear energy, public authorities in France launched a massive program to develop it.

Likely aiding the effort in France was an interest in new technologies, as seen in the development of high-speed rail and air travel, and a feeling of "it's been invented here" due to contributions to the field of radioactivity made by scientists such as Henri Becquerel, Dr. Lucchini noted.

Factors in nuclear energy's continuing success in France are a centralized power structure and strong research and development, he said.

Public opinion polls show 52 percent of the population in France supports nuclear power, while 41 percent is opposed.

ANS, established in 1954, is a non-profit membership organization with more than 10,500 members, including engineers, scientists, educators, and other nuclear professionals. Membership provides opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and networking.

The local chapter of the American Nuclear Society is having its FY07-08 membership drive. Contact Candice Jierree at 234-8325 for a copy of the membership form.

Submitted by Victoria Parker (LANL-CO)

Their View:
Interns comment on being at WIPP

"I enjoy the work and the responsibility that is given to me. The managers don't hold back and I'm gaining good experience."

Noy Quintela
New Mexico State University (NMSU) graduate in human resources management

"Everyone is helpful and there is no problem keeping busy."

Karen Farrell
University of New Mexico student majoring in biology and Spanish

"I was really surprised about the temperature in the mine. I thought it was going to be a lot colder."

Stan Dyer
NMSU graduate student in electrical engineering

"I look forward to the fish sampling. I can't wait to get out into the field and do sampling."

Sarah Gonzales
New Mexico Tech student in environmental engineering

"I hope to encounter new and challenging things throughout the internship."

Jonathan Kouba
Hardin-Simmons University student studying economics and finance

WIPP 301:
WTS interns are learning on the job

A college education doesn't guarantee a lucrative and fulfilling career in the future. Success comes from hard work, networking and experience. WTS's interns arrived at WIPP on May 14 in hopes of achieving all three.

Eleven college students from New Mexico, Oklahoma and Missouri experienced WIPP first hand when they went through General Employee Training (GET), met the organization's community and toured the facility and mine.

Many of the students are enjoying the people they work with and are glad the mentors and managers are challenging them and teaching them new skills.

The interns will be part of the WIPP community for the duration of the summer and most of the students will return to school in late August. Before they leave, the interns will do a presentation in front of their peers, mentors, and/or their managers.

"It's not just an internship. The interns will have to present what they've learned and how it relates to their degree," says Kathy Kessler, who coordinates the internship program for WTS.

Interested in WIPP?

If you would like to be notified when TRU TeamWorks is updated with the latest information about WIPP, send an e-mail message to TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws.

How to develop a safety basis document: TRU waste sites get technical standard to smooth the path to WIPP

The path to WIPP became smoother in April when DOE Headquarters issued a technical standard that provides details for sites on how to develop safety basis documents for TRU waste facilities.

Safety basis documents analyze potential natural and man-made hazards and identify safety controls to mitigate them. For example, fire is a potential hazard that can be addressed by installing fire sprinklers.

Prior to the standard, there was a lack of consistency in identifying hazards and controls, and “analysis paralysis” caused prolonged facility shutdowns at some sites.

Compared to most DOE standards, the safety basis standard was developed, went through required review periods, and was issued in a remarkably short timeframe. The effort was kicked off in March 2006 by the National TRU Waste Corporate Board, which is composed of representatives from DOE sites that ship to WIPP and works to expedite the disposition of TRU waste. An executive committee was formed, and working groups were established with participants from around the DOE complex.

The executive committee was chaired by Inés Triay, chief operating officer for the DOE’s environmental management (EM) program, with co-chair Dae Chung, EM deputy assistant secretary for safety management and operations. Also on the executive committee was Chuan-Fu Wu, EM chief safety officer.

Stephanie Jennings (LANL-CO) and Carla Mewhinney (SNL-CPG) provided technical support.

At the next corporate board meeting, site representatives will discuss how they plan to implement the standard, which is intended for use at all DOE and National Nuclear Security Administration sites.

Preparation of Safety Basis Documents for Transuranic (TRU) Waste Facilities (DOE-STD-5506-2007) is available at http://www.hss.energy.gov/NuclearSafety/techstds/standard/standard.html.

Submitted by Victoria Parker (LANL-CO)